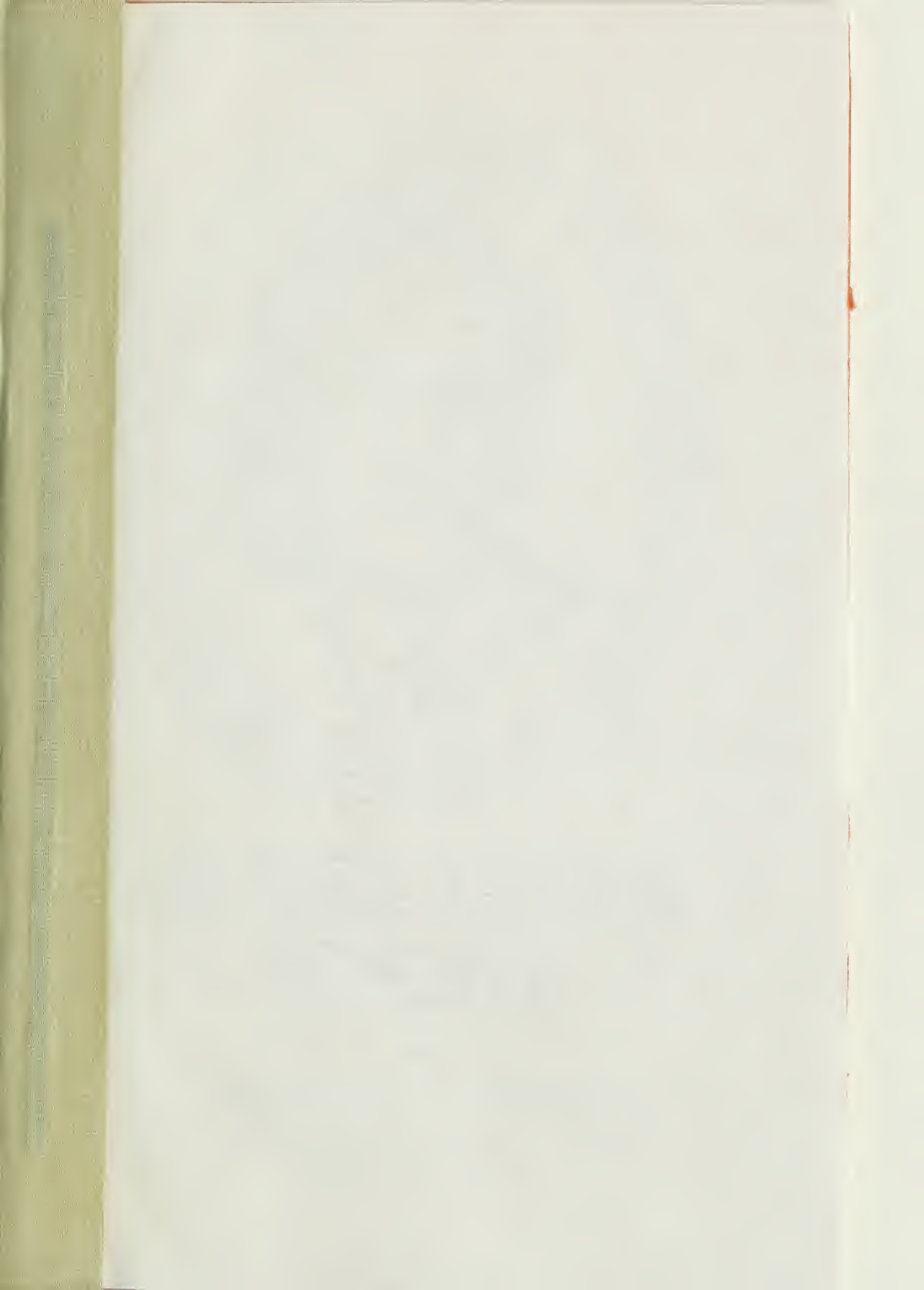


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Charles M. Sheldon.

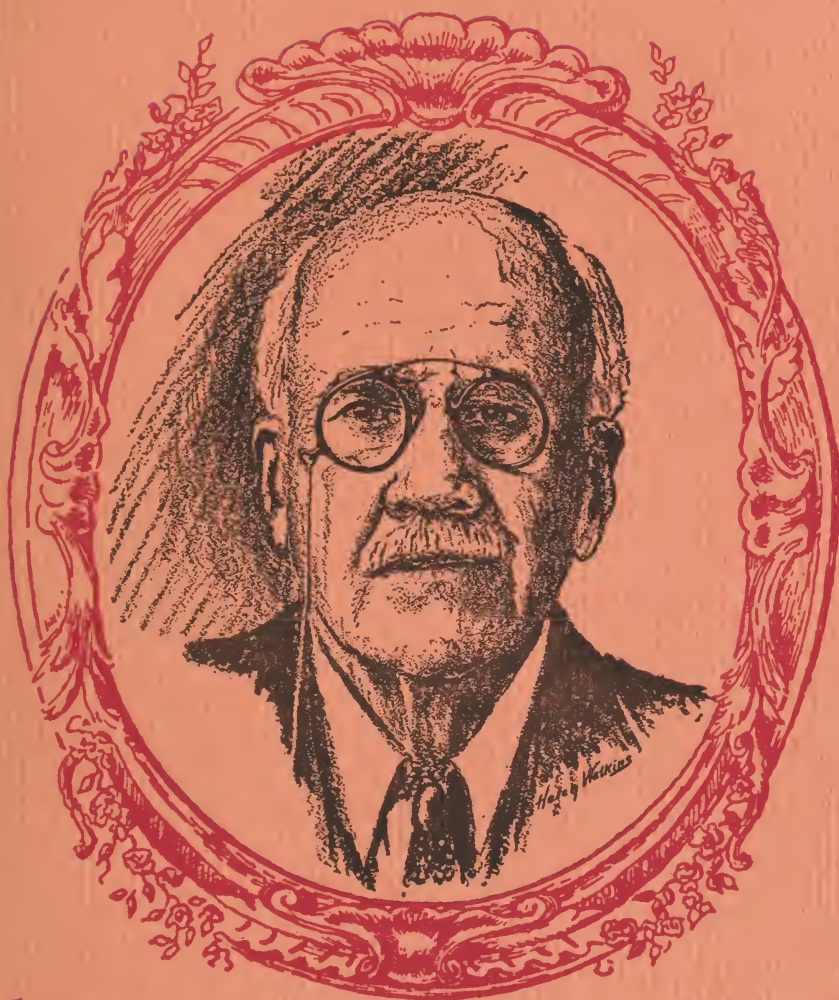
In His Steps Today. (1948)

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY





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1948



IN HIS STEPS TODAY

By
CHARLES M. SHELDON


ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY



CHARLES M. SHELDON

In 1896, at the age of 39, when he wrote "In His Steps."
This was Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon's favorite photograph
for more than 50 years.

In His Steps Today



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In His Steps

Today

By

CHARLES M. SHELDON

MEMORIAL EDITION



THE SUNSHINE PRESS

At The House of Sunshine

LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS, U. S. A.



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FIRST EDITION

Made in the United States of America

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1948

220. Hist. Survey

FORWARD

CHARLES M. SHELDON

1621 COLLEGE AVE.

TOPEKA, KANSAS

Nov. 5 1948

Dear Sir. I regret I am not able to tell

You where you can get a copy of "In His Steps Today." It is out of print and I do not know where it can be found. I have only ^{one} copy and that is in the Church Library where all my books are. Thank you for copy of your book. I shall prize it.

Very cordially Charles M. Sheldon

Dr. Sheldon's most widely-read story, "In His Steps," was written in 1896. Subsequently, to illustrate the practical application of the theory advanced in his story, Dr. Sheldon wrote "In His Steps Today."

This latter work became quickly exhausted and out of print. Numerous calls for copies remained unfilled. Issues became exceedingly rare, and, as will be observed in the above facsimile transcript, Dr. Sheldon himself knew of the existence of only one copy.

Consequently the Publisher sought the author's permission to re-publish this work. This he freely granted, and also provided a new and refreshing preface (p. 9), shortly prior to his death.



PREFACE

The story, "In His Steps," was written by me, in 1896, and read a chapter at a time to the young people in my church, the Congregational, in Topeka, Kansas. As a result of that reading, I have had reason to believe that over twenty-five of the young people, members of the Christian Endeavor Society, went out into the world as missionaries, and did a wonderful service in preaching the Gospel ❀ ❀

Also, as a result of the story, a great many people in different parts of the world began to try to follow the "Steps of Jesus," and ask the question, "What Would He Do" in all conditions of life today?

The story of "In His Steps Today" is simply an example of a multitude of such people trying to put the question into practical everyday use.

And may I hope that the reading of the story may result in similar action on the part of families. We are

living in a world where the action of peoples everywhere in the spirit of the Great Teacher will have a tremendous effect in the shaping of the history of the nations that are confronted with problems of international importance and meaning.

My hope and prayer is that the publication of this story by The Sunshine Press may have wide reading and results ❀ ❀

Charles M. Sheldon

Topeka, Kansas, February 4, 1946.

CHARLES M. SHELDON

1857-1946

DR. CHARLES MONROE SHELDON was stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage on Monday, February 18, 1946, although apparently in sound health. He never regained consciousness. His condition became critically worse early Sunday morning, February 24, and he died Sunday evening, February 24, 1946, at 8:31 o'clock. Born in Wellsville, New York, February 26, 1857, he lacked two days at the time of his death of completing the 89th year of his life » »

The last rites were held in Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, on his birthday anniversary, Tuesday, February 26, 1946, at 4 o'clock, Dr. Charles Warren Helsley, his pastor and intimate friend, officiating. The mortal resting place of Dr. Sheldon is in Mt. Hope cemetery, Topeka's beautiful God's Acre.

*What would Jesus do if he were walking
with the modern crowds abroad today,
or mingling with the young people in
high school and college?*

Aroused to Action

Part I

Mr. Ward Suggests a Plan.



R. and Mrs. Ralph Ward and their four children were sitting at the breakfast table one morning, talking in the usual way about the day's program for the family. George and Alice were attending a college in the home town, while John and Mary were in high school. Mr. Ward was an official in a railroad office. Mrs. Ward



was prominent in the social, church, and literary life of the city where the family lived.

The talk went its way about the school life, the coming football game in which George was deeply interested because he was on the team, the new Woman's Club house, the new tourist program of the consolidated railroads, and finally an entirely new subject broached by Mr. Ward.

"About twenty-five years ago," he began, "just before your mother and I were married, we read a little book, entitled, 'In His Steps, or What Would Jesus Do?' While I was in the library yesterday, I came across the book, took it down, and began to read it again. In fact, I sat up a large part of last night, reading it.

"I have been wondering if the plan is practical, if it will really work. Now, you young ones are interested in new things, and in making experiments. George, you remember telling us yesterday of your experiments in the chemical laboratory? Why, you have an illustration of it



on your nose. It's as plain as your face" ❀ ❀ ❀

"I always said George's face was plain," interposed John, "and I'm glad to have father corroborate me."

"I was experimenting with hydrogen gas," answered George, ignoring his brother's remark. "I think I came near making a discovery, but my retort exploded when I was bending over it. It's no end of fun, because you never can tell when you may hit on something new."

"Or when it may hit on you," suggested John.

"Well, that's what encourages me to propose a plan," continued Mr. Ward, looking around the family circle. "Years ago a large number of people took the pledge to try to act as Jesus would, and they had some very interesting experiences. If you are eager to try experiments in the world of chemistry, amusements, and athletics, why not try some experiments in the world of conduct? I have been wondering if you four



children would be willing to see what you could do in the laboratory of behavior; if you would be willing to pledge yourselves for one day—say today, for example—not to do anything without first asking: ‘What would Jesus do?’ and then trying to do the same?”



The Pledge Is Approved.



A MOMENT of embarrassing silence followed around the Ward breakfast table. The subject was unusual, although they were a Christian family, and still held to family worship and Bible reading. John and Mary belonged to the Hi-Y, and the college students were more or less active in the Christian Associations at college; so their father's proposition was not so much of a shock to them as it probably would have been to a good many American families.



The silence was broken by John, the "irrepressible," as the others called him. "If we take that pledge, what's the matter with you and mother taking it, too? You were talking to us yesterday about the bad example the old people set to the young generation. How about you and mother, Dad?" ❀ ❀

Mr. and Mrs. Ward looked at each other



across the breakfast table. Mr. Ward seemed a little startled, and his wife looked anxious, as if suddenly thinking of something that raised serious questions. The look that passed between them, however, seemed to answer the boy's question in the same way. In fact there was only one way to answer it. "All right, what do you say, Julia? We ought to be willing to do what we ask the rest of the family to do."

"I'll join in the pledge with the understanding that each one of us gives it an honest and sincere trial," replied Mrs. Ward after only a moment of hesitation  

Another silence followed around the table. Perhaps the members of this family did not know it, but the event was making history for all of them. "Suppose we say the time for this pledge is from now until ten o'clock tonight," suggested Mr. Ward. "We will all meet here at that time to tell our experiences, holding back nothing"  

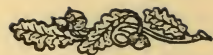


The Laboratory of Behavior.

THERE was a general agreement. Mr. Ward picked up the Bible which lay by his plate every morning, read a few verses from one of the Gospels, and offered a short, simple prayer, the rest joining him in repeating the Lord's Prayer. This was a daily habit, as was also the custom of each one of the children to rise and go around to their father's and mother's places at the table to kiss them good-by as they went out to school. This morning there was an uncommon look of seriousness on each face as the young people left the house and Mr. and Mrs. Ward were alone.

"How did you happen to think of this, Ralph?" asked Mrs. Ward as the door closed on the young students.

"Simply because I happened on the book. I really want to test the matter out myself. John caught me asking the very thing he put to me. I



have an idea I'm going to have some new experiences before the day is over."

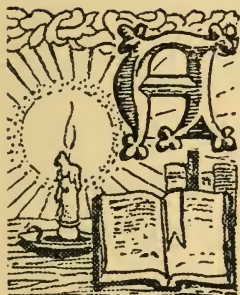
"I know I am," answered his wife. They talked over the matter for a little before Mr. Ward left home for his day's work. Mrs. Ward was to be at her Woman's Club for lunch, her husband always ate at the Chamber of Commerce down town, the college students generally ate at the College Inn on the campus, and the high school students at their school cafeteria; so the family did not meet again until the evening meal ❀ ❀

When they sat down to that, a general feeling of repressed excitement was evident. Mr. Ward held to the morning plan of telling their combined experiences at ten o'clock. He had an engagement with a literary club to which he belonged; his wife was going to a neighbor's to hear a new radio, the college students were due at a meeting of the Glee Club, and the high school pupils were going to an entertainment.

Experience Meeting

Part II

Mr. Ward Is Threatened.



FEW minutes before ten John and Mary came in, to find the others in the sitting room where the family centered at times of general interest. "Let father begin," said John, who with his sister Mary seemed to be alive with excitement.

Mr. Ward agreed, and suggested that each one condense. "We haven't time for long drawn



out speeches. My first experience came to me as I went into my office this morning, and looking through into the next room, saw Crawford of the auditing department. He was very much put out yesterday when he accused me of backing into his car out in front of the office, and bending a fender. I told him he had parked his car at such an angle that I couldn't get out without hitting it. We both became angry. This morning I went in, asked his pardon, and offered to buy him a new fender. It did us both good.

“There's another story goes with this, but it will keep 🌹 🌹

“This afternoon out at the golf course, while I was putting my things back into my locker, two of the members of the club came in and took flasks out of their lockers, drank, and offered some to the rest of us. This has been going on for a long time against the rules of the club and the laws of the state, but no one has ever enforced them. It seemed to me that if Jesus saw a crime



being committed, he would consider it his duty as a good citizen to prevent it. I went to the chairman of the House Committee and reported the breaking of the rules, which has raised a storm 🌸 🌸

“Several of the members came to me this evening down at the literary club, and threatened to blackball me at the next election for directors if I did not withdraw my charges against the drinkers. More will come from this. But what would Jesus do? It has been an interesting day. Let's hear from your mother.”



Mrs. Ward Becomes Unpopular.

MRS. WARD was very serious. "I really did not know what following Jesus might mean, but my story has to do with the action of our woman's Board of Directors in renting a part of our building to certain parties who are allowing dancing of a questionable character to go on, together with card games that are practically nothing but gambling.

"I have known of this for some time as all the women do, but did not want to be unpopular by objecting. At the directors' meeting today, however, I expressed my opinion and objection. The club is in debt, and the amusement concessions bring in big rent. I am the only member of the board to file a protest. It will mean—" Mrs. Ward paused, and there was a moment of silence 🌸 🌸



The Football Hero Proves His Mettle.

“GEORGE, how about you?” Mr. Ward turned to the college football player.

“Dad, I’m up against it hard, but I tried to answer the question of following Jesus honestly. It’s like this: You know Hardy, our fullback. He is a Negro, not a full-blooded African, but almost. Well, he is really our best player, and a gentleman in every way; the fellows all like him.

“As we were all together in the dressing room at the gym, getting ready to go out for our regular scrimmage, a telegram came to the coach from Milford, where we are scheduled to play next week, saying that we would have to take Hardy out, as Milford will not play any team that has Negro players. The coach, with the consent of all the rest of the fellows, was going to wire Milford that we would substitute another player for Hardy, when it seemed to me that Jesus would do something else.



“I objected, stood up for Hardy, and seeing the fellows were all against me, I finally told them that if Hardy was taken out, they could take me out, too. I don’t know what final action will be taken by the coach.”

Silence held around the table, for George was a football fan. It was meat and drink for him. Not even John could find anything to say.

*“What is that to thee?
Follow thou me.”*

—John 21:22



Alice Scorns Hypocrites.

“MY experience has been rather queer, I think,” said Alice as her father turned to her. “You know there has been talk about the smoking on the campus. The faculty has lately made the new rule that smoking would be allowed at certain hours in the rooms over the College Inn for the men, but the trustees made the ruling that any girl student found smoking on the campus anywhere or at any time, would be instantly dismissed from college. This ruling seemed to me to be so unjust that I called a meeting of our class. You know I’m president this semester, and I took the matter up to make a general protest against this double standard for the sexes 🌸 🌸

“One of the things I have always thought of Jesus is that he was indignant when he faced hypocrites, and it looks to me like rank hypocrisy to allow men to have certain habits, and



punish women for having the same. It seems to me the way to solve the problem is to abolish smoking 🌿 🌿

“That’s my story. The trustees and the president will be—well I don’t know what, but what would Jesus do?”

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

—Luke 9:23



Mary and John Surprise the Manager.

SILENCE again around the Ward table. "We will hear from John and Mary before we comment or argue," said Mr. Ward.

John motioned to Mary to begin. "If she forgets anything I'll correct it," he said.

"We went to an entertainment this evening. A lot of the girls at the high school had been to see it, and they told John and me that it was grand. But I'd rather John told what happened."

John seemed to be unusually reluctant to relate their experiences. Finally he spoke in a subdued tone that was unlike his usual loud and assertive manner.



"Well, after it began," he said, "I thought it was one of those foolish things that was just for—well, just entertainment. Then I remembered what you said one day, Mother, about not wanting Mary and me to go to any entertainment

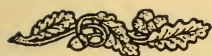


that we wouldn't invite you or father to see. Well it got pretty vulgar, and—"

Another silence around the table. Mrs. Ward looked at the boy with a new expression, as if some very rare experience were being related—as indeed it was.

The boy went on slowly: "Just then Mary nudged me and whispered, 'Let's get up and go out!' Honest, I thought it would be a queer thing to do, but when I asked 'What would Jesus do?' it seemed all right. So we got up, treading on a lot of feet in the row where we had been sitting."

"On our way out," broke in Mary, "I said to John, 'Let's do one more thing. Let's tell the manager why we are going out.' John said, 'All right, and let's tell him to give us our money back because we did not pay for that kind of entertainment.' You never will see a more surprised man than Mr. Rondus when we told him how we felt!"  



“Surprised isn’t the word,” interrupted John. “He was flabbergasted! When I told him we thought he ought to refund our money, he didn’t say a word, but forked the money right over. Do you think we did what Jesus would do?”

Mrs. Ward had a tear in her eye. She reached over and stroked the boy’s head. “A thing like that never happened in this town before. Well, we certainly have had some new experiences.”

“Worthwhile, don’t you think? But can we keep it up?” questioned Mr. Ward.

The question provoked a discussion around the Ward table that lasted into the next morning.

What do you think?



IN HIS STEPS TODAY

Colophon: A classic of widening import, set in Poliphilus and Blado typefaces and printed on Puritan Parchtex in Ecru and Rose. Cover portrait in crayon, made by Helen Watkins from photograph taken by L. Cady Hodge a few days prior to Dr. Sheldon's fatal illness. All done in character by The Sunshine Press at The House of Sunshine in Litchfield, Illinois, U. S. A. . . .



CHARLES M. SHELDON

Dr. Sheldon's own selection from the last set of negatives made a few days prior to his death, by L. Cady Hodge, his personal friend and photographer.



IN HIS STEPS TODAY

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